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ABSTRACT

A study involving 12 elementary age Hispanic children identified as gifted and placed in a creative arts program investigated the issue of identifying gifted minority group children. Ss were administered the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) and the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS). Comparisons were made between teacher nominations and scores on the Estimated Learning Potential (ELP) of the SOMPA, scores on the CCS, and which instrument identified more children within the gifted range. ELP scores were more consistent than CCS scores in identifying gifted minority children who had been previously nominated by teachers. It was concluded that traditional standardized assessment measures alone do not adequately identify minority group gifted children. (SB)

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Identification of Gifted Minority Group Children

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Review and Rationale

Present educational emphasis has been directed towards meeting the educational needs of children from culturally and linguistically different minority groups. Recent litigation procedures exemplify the concern (P.L. 94-142). However, in the process of providing educational experiences, educators have completely neglected the gifted child within this population (Sato, 1974). Much of the blame for the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically different minority group children is directed to the procedures used in identification (Bernal and Reyna, 1972; Gallagher and Kinney, 1974; Gay, 1978; Frasier, 1979).

It has been hypothesized that present I.Q. assessment procedures identify only one gifted minority child in every three, and much of this is due to the lack of proper identification procedures (Bernal, 1974, 1979). Studies by Meeker (1971), Bruch (1972) and Stallings (1972), suggest that early identification and intervention is of curcial importance in any program for gifted children. Bernal (1972) and Bernal and DeAvila (1976) suggest it is inadvisable to attempt early identification using culturally biased instruments since traditional assessment measures identify only the most acculturated minority child. It has been suggested that a gifted minority group child's potential may be "masked" by the inability of present assessment procedures to take into account sociocultural differences which may exist between the child's culture and the culture of the school (Bernal and Reyna, 1972; DeAvila, 1972; Hernandez, 1969; Mercer, 1976).

As a result, a gifted minority child group child's potential may be masked by the inability of present assessment procedures to take into account the cultural specificity of the test and the socio-cultural differences which may exist between the child's culture and the culture of the school (Bernal and Reyna, 1972; Hernandez, 1969; Mercer, 1976).

Assessment Alternatives

The measurement of creativity, as an alternative to intelligence testing of potentially gifted minority children, has been discussed by some investigators (Swenson, 1978). From this perspective, creativity represents a more positive approach to assessment which offers disadvantaged children a fair chance to excel. Although there is no consensus regarding creativity it may include artistic capability, etc.

Some investigators have discussed the use of behavior rating scales to identify potentially gifted minority group children, specifically Mexican-American children (Bernal, 1974). Behavior rating scales are usually administered to teachers and/or parents, and attempt to identify those behaviors perceived as revealing giftedness in children. Since giftedness differs from culture to culture and always defined in a social context, Bernal (1974) believes that culturally and linguistically different minority group children have unique social and cultural values which are regarded as characteristic of giftedness.

De Avila (1975) has suggested the use of Piagetian-based tasks as a possible alternative to traditional intelligence measures since cultural and socio-economic factors are seemingly less affected on Piagetian tasks than on traditional I.Q. tests.

Some researchers have concluded that teacher observation is the key factor in the identification process (Passow, 1972; Sato, 1974). However, in a report prepared by the U.S. Office of Education Commissioner (1972) studying educational practices it was reported that teachers fail to identify 50% of the gifted children.

Mercer and Lewis (1977), and De Avila (1976) have proposed the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) and the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) as alternatives to the identification of potentially gifted minority children since these instruments were specifically designed for minority school-age children and are practical to administer in school settings. Research to establish validity of these alternatives, therefore, is needed.

As a final alternative assessment procedure, some authors have called for multiple measures of giftedness. Bernal (1975), for example, discussed the need for a philosophy of "inclusion" for minority students that will qualify him or her under <u>any one</u> of the identification methods, such as tests, case studies, teacher, parent or peer nomination, or other evidence of creative and/or high achievement.

<u>Method</u>

<u>Subjects</u> - The study was conducted in an urban school district

of the Southwestern United States. The sample consisted of twelve elementary age Hispanic children identified as gifted by the teacher who were placed part-time in the Creative Arts Program. The sample was comprised of five boys and seven girls whose chronological age ranged from 93 months to 144 months with a mean C.A. of 126.8 months (SD = 18.98).

Instruments - The System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) (Mercer and Lewis, 1977) utilizes pluralistic norms to assess a child as normal, subnormal and supranormal, depending on how his/her scores on a test compare with scores of other children at the same age from similar sociocultural backgrounds. The comparisons yield Estimates of Learning Potential (ELP) that take into account the cultural background of the child.

The SOMPA has two parts, the Parent Interview and the Student Assessment. The Parent Interview contains questions dealing with socioeconomic status, health history and family background. The Student Assessment contains six tests, each measuring a specific skill. The six tests are Physical Dexterity Tasks, the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt, Weight by Height, Visual Acuity, Auditory Acuity and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R). The instrument used for assessing the child's environment is the Sociocultural Scales which yield four scores relative to Family Size, Family Structure, Socioeconomic Status and Urban Acculturation. Scores on the Sociocultural Scales are used to

predict average WISC-R I.Q.s (ELP) of children having a particular combination of sociocultural characteristics. For purposes of this study, only the Sociocultural Scales of the SOMPA were employed.

The Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) (De Avila, 1976) were designed to measure cognitive development in relation to Piagetian stage-related constructs. The scales are language independent, therefore, particularly useful for children from limited or non-English speaking backgrounds. The use of Piagetian-based conceptual tasks are considered by some researchers to be less affected by cultural and socio-economic factors than are traditional intelligence testing measures.

The CCS employs a pictorial format approach in assessing the intelligence development of children from language minority backgrounds. Tasks are viewed as developmental indicators which in turn are related to specific cognitive operations, which are considered critical to academic performance.

Procedure - Each child of the sample group was administered the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) (which includes the WISC-R), and the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS). Pearson product-moment correlations were examinations for comparisons between teacher nominations and (1) scores on the Estimated Learning Potential (ELP) of the SOMPA, which are in the gifted range, (2) scores on the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) which are in the gifted range; and (3) which instrument identified more children within the gifted range.

Results - Estimated Learning Potential (ELP) scores were more consistent in identifying gifted minority children that had previously been nominated by teachers than Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) scores. When teacher nominations were compared with ELP scores, a higher percentage of minority group children were predicted as being in the gifted range than CCS scores.

The children's I.Q. scores on the WISC-R School Functioning Level (SFL) Verbal Subscale ranged from 113 to 130, with a mean score of 122 (SD 5.6). Performance scores ranged from 98 to 121, with a mean score 109 (SD 8.7). Full Scale scores ranged from 106 to 128, with a mean of 118 (SD 7.0).

In comparison, the children's scores on the Estimated Learning Potential (ELP) Verbal Subscale ranged 122 to 138, with a mean score of 127 (SD 8.0).

The Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) scores ranged from 27 to 32 with a mean score of 29 (SD 1.78). A summary of the descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

Discussion

Although the information obtained from this study cannot and should not be the definite answer to procedures needed for identifying gifted minority group children, it does, however, provide some interesting information that warrants serious examination.

For example, when examining the performance of the subjects on the WISC-R alone, only one out of the twelve scored in the range to be considered for placement in a gifted program. In comparison, when

the WISC-R I.Q. scores were considered in relation to sociocultural variables (ELP), seven of the twelve subjects qualified for placement in a gifted program. Traditionally, to be considered as gifted, and thus qualify for an educational program for the gifted, an I.Q. score of 130 and above on either the Verbal Performance or Full Scale was the defining criteria.

In addition, the WISC-R Verbal I.Q. scores of eleven of the twelve children were higher than the performance I.Q. scores. This finding suggests that since verbal facility, i.e., large vocabulary, is usually associated with high intelligence this may possibly have been a reason why the children were initially identified as gifted by the teachers. Furthermore, this finding lends to contradict existing notions that minority group children, particularly children from non-English-speaking home environments, demonstrate communication difficulties in school, therefore, are less verbal in the classroom.

Data from this study also revealed that 58% of the teacher nominated children were identified as being in the gifted range by the Estimated Learning Potential (ELP). In comparison, only 35% of the teacher nominated children were identified as gifted by the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS). This finding suggests that a minority group child's potential may be, in fact, masked by the inability of assessment procedures to take into account the cultural specificity of the instrument and the distance between the child's location in sociocultural space and the culture of the school, as the literature indicates (Mercer, 1976).

In summary, the Estimated Learning Potential (ELP) was more consistent in identifying gifted minority group children that had been previcusly nominated by the teachers than the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS). A higher percentage of minority group children were predicted as being gifted by the ELP than by the CCS.

Conclusion

It is evident that traditional standardized assessment measures alone do not adequately identify minority group gifted children. Therefore, more efficient identification procedures must be implemented if educational systems are to meet the unique educational needs of this group. The data from this study presents an assessment procedure which will hopefully stop penalizing potentially gifted minority group children for their cultural heritage, thus allowing us to move one step closer to meeting the educational needs of this neglected population.

TABLE I

Subject by C.A. (in months)	Sex	WISC-R SFL V	P	FS	WISC-R ELP V	P	FS	CCS Grand Total Scores And Percent Passing By Age	
93	Female	127	109	121	130	110	125	27	26.58
95	Male	120	109	118	130	110	127	29	26.58
112	Female	115	117	118	130	122	133	31	31.78
112	Female	124	98	113	134	99	122	27	31.78
132	Female	128	115	125	132	117	130	32	32.30
132	Female	128	121	128	138	125	139	32	32.30
134	Female	122	109	118	129	109	124	30	32.30
136	Female	115	102	110	122	104	117	28	32.30
144	Male	113	98	106	125	99	114	28	32.98
144	Male	130	121	128	140	124	139	29	32.98
144	Male	124	115	123	134	120	134	29	32.98
144	Male	123	98	112	134	99	122	31	32.88

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